

News

Minutes of the
31st meeting
of the CCC

Features

3D Politics - out of
the twilight zone
Part 1. Citizen in community

Art

Graphics
Sketchbook series
by Jeffery Cheyne

Cooperative voice at Women's Conference

Cooperatives, through the International Cooperative Alliance, have contributed to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In its statement to the Conference the ICA reiterated the potential of cooperatives for improving the economic and social conditions of women worldwide. The ICA statement stressed that cooperatives have a key role to play as they are able to respond to women's practical and strategic needs - those critical areas noted in the *Platform for Action* - by providing access to income-generating activities as worker-owners and providing essential services, such as health-care, child-care and consumer goods, which contribute to the advancement of women.

The ICA stated: "Cooperatives are a form of organisation which women can use to help themselves. With their democratic structure, cooperatives offer women opportunities for participation in and influence over economic activities. Women gain self-reliance through this participation, as well as access to opportunities which they would not have been able to obtain on their own". The *Platform for Action* recognised the contribution of cooperatives to the advancement of women - that of increasing women's economic capacities through income-generating opportunities.

The statement referred to the role of the ICA in gender integration and women in cooperative development saying, "over the last 100 years of its existence, the International Cooperative Alliance has been working with and through cooperatives to empower both men and women in partnership. Indeed in its very first Congress in 1895, the need to fully integrate women into the Cooperative Movement was recognised as a means to achieving economic and social advancement. Cooperatives have served communities and contributed to the advancement of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe".

"However, we realise that much work lies ahead", the ICA acknowledged. "Through their national regional and international organisations, cooperatives have pledged to further the advancement of women. The International Cooperative Alliance is actively working towards this aim".

(Source: ICANEWS)



Canadian housing co-ops take up the challenge of domestic violence

Five years ago, Jackson's Point Housing Cooperative in Toronto, Canada, became the first housing cooperative to call itself a "domestic violence-free zone". A new by-law allowed the board of directors to evict abusers and to provide subsidies to help victims of abuse in the co-op.

A year later, Jackson's Point Cooperative came to the Canadian Cooperative Housing Foundation's annual meeting to ask other co-ops to talk about domestic violence. The response was overwhelming. Over 400 delegates passed a resolution urging the Foundation's members to declare their co-ops domestic violence-free zones.

The Foundation has since passed resolutions and put together information to encourage more co-ops to get involved in this issue. In 1992, members passed a resolution urging co-ops to extend their domestic violence by-laws to protect children. Thom Armstrong, Director of Corporate Affairs at the Foundation says the resolutions and policies are a national response to grass roots concerns. "The efforts of co-ops like Jackson's Point Housing Cooperative have encouraged us to promote the issue more widely among our members."

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The 31st CCC meeting minutes

August 5th, 1995

at The Upfront Club
Cooperative, Maple St,
Maleny

Attendance: Peter Pamment, Jill Jordan,
Ann Jupp, Merv Partridge, Jeff Walz,
Anthony Esposito, Paul Monsour
Apologies: Jan Tilden, Allan Halladay,
Christine Zangari, Kerry Petherbridge,
Rosanne Brown

Facilitator: Merv Partridge

Minute-taker: Anthony Esposito

Agenda

1. Acceptance of the 5th annual and
30th meetings' minutes
2. Strategic issues in the regional
community -
 - i. federations
 - ii. cooperatives legislation
 - iii. community capital
3. Correspondence and other secretary
matters
4. Cooperative Education Events review
5. Secretariat structure review
(carried over)
6. CCC & CESC agreement
(carried over)

Acceptance of the minutes of the CCC's 5th annual and 30th meetings

Anthony Esposito moved that the minutes
of the CCC's 5th annual and 30th meetings
be accepted as true records. This was
seconded by Ann Jupp and carried.

Council Papers

*The Council Papers are edited and
published bi-monthly by the Secretariat of
the Cooperative Community Council. The
Papers are open to submission of art work
and articles from members and associates.
The Council reserves the right to select
content. Contact the Secretary on
07 3366 7089 or by mail at CCC Secretariat,
30 St Johns Ave, Ashgrove, Brisbane, 4060.*



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Armstrong believes federations of housing
co-ops can play an important role. The
national federation has produced a domestic
violence kit and training workshops to
help give co-operators the tools they need to
understand and deal with domestic vio-
lence in their communities.

In spite of this support, co-ops are discover-
ing that there are no easy solutions. "Pre-
venting domestic violence goes far beyond
calling a meeting and creating a policy that
allows the co-op to evict abusers", says
Karla Skoutajan, Cooperative Management
Officer at the Foundation. "Changing peo-
ple's attitudes is a very difficult process. In
the meantime, though, we need to put safe-
guards in place that are sensitive to the real
needs of the victims."

"Leaving brochures and posting phone num-
bers of emergency services in a neutral area
- like the co-op laundry room - tells women
that support is there," says Judy Oswin, a

member of the Jackson's Point Housing
Cooperative.

Oswin says co-ops shouldn't get hung up on
the eviction question when talking about
domestic violence-free zones. "Have it in
your by-laws, but concentrate on raising
awareness, on sharing information and giv-
ing support."

Armstrong is encouraged that more co-ops
are talking about domestic violence and
taking action. "Of course it would be wrong
to think that there is more violence in co-ops
than in the larger community. In tackling
the issue housing co-ops are just showing
the leadership that they have always shown
on a great number of important social is-
sues.

"We all know that co-op housing is more
than just putting a roof over our heads," he
says. "Deciding what kind of communities
we want to live in is the very heart of what
co-op housing is all about."

(Source: ICANEWS)



Topics revisited in critical focus

Strategic issues in the regional cooperative community

Three topics have re-emerged with discussion of strategic issues: federations, cooperatives legislation and community capital.

The meeting ran a check on their status.

Federations

The Cooperative Federation of Queensland (CFQ) is promoting itself and encouraging smaller cooperatives to join. They have restructured their fees to encourage this. Peter says that the Maleny Credit Union joined and has invited the secretary, Tony Connors, to speak to their Board. Peter says he will report back to the council.

We note that the CFQ has a voice with Government and that it would be good to find out the Government's attitude to the CFQ. We question what alternatives there are to the CFQ because it is broadly based on primary producers cooperatives and note that these issues were behind the original initiative in setting up the CCC. At that time the CFQ had auspiced a working group to look at a 'community sector association'. The working group process eventually led to the setting up of the CCC as an autonomous body.

The question was raised whether the Maleny cooperatives were still heading towards federation. Peter said that "a union of some sort" was being discussed but was not on the agendas of the various cooperative AGMs which are all scheduled for the same weekend. This, he felt, was a strong indication that a union would not happen in the near future, as the joint AGMs weekend is the most significant opportunity for this. He thinks it is a good idea but is being talked about mostly to provide practical services - for pragmatic reasons.

Anthony says that there can be two strands when talking about federations - strategic vis-a-vis pragmatic. He says some federations are set up pragmatically, to service a sector or group of co-ops, for example the Queensland Butter Producers Cooperative Federation which does manufacture and marketing. Other federations are primarily political and seek to advance cooperatives in a strategic way. He thinks the CCC has largely considered federation in strategic terms.

In this sense there are strategic goals, and options open to us, which don't require the apparatus and burdens of a traditional federation of cooperatives. The idea of temporary alliances for specific purposes is a useful one, Anthony says, and the CCC developments show promise in this. He thinks that our creation of an associative structure can facilitate this approach, particularly on legislative change, though it's too early to tell what sort of response we will get from the community co-ops. He thinks it may be necessary to approach and lobby the co-ops directly. He says that the way in which the CCC and Community Works/CESG are evolving indicates that organising according to 'federal principles' can have many and creative outcomes.

Anthony thinks the CFQ also provides an avenue for strategic purposes. The past experience where Margi O'Connell, as a representative of an individual cooperative member of the CFQ, got onto the Board is

illustrative. This was when the Federation instigated the 'community sector association' idea. He says this type of option is being considered again by a co-op he is involved with, which is strongly interested in legislative change to allow for smaller membership numbers.

Merv raises the fact that the Australian Association of Cooperatives, a national federation, sort to boost itself as a broadly representative body to government by including the community co-ops. The experience for them was that the big co-ops were providing the funding and the small co-ops were in a position to out-vote them. This bred problems. Peter says that some credit union federations have adopted tiered but still democratic organisations to prevent this and devised ways to share services equitably.

To conclude the group agree that understanding of federation issues is advancing in the council.

Cooperatives legislation

The meeting notes that legislation is a current, and has been an ongoing, issue in the council. It considers that there has been substantial work on a number of fronts. The report in the last Council Papers gives a

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Education event survey results for next council meeting

Cooperative Education Events review

The meeting acknowledged that there is work in progress on the review with Christine developing the questionnaire. Paul said he is wanting to see a broader discussion and focus on advance planning.

He notes that 36 people attended the last event and that the financial position was break-even. People think this is a reasonably good result. Paul says that there was one 100 to 120 hours of work involved.

He feels that there must be at least two committed people, one from Brisbane and one from Maleny, organising these events and that there could be a couple of events in the year - on one day or a weekend.

Paul reiterates the functions performed by the events.

These are, he says:

- ~ introducing new people to the movement
- ~ training for co-op activists
- ~ education on cooperative principles
- ~ delving and philosophising for 'old timers'
- ~ socialising - a regional get together.

It is felt that the questionnaire will take account of these considerations. We agree that we need a response by the next meeting to allow adequate time for planning. It is suggested that we have evaluation forms available at the time of the events.

Paul questions whether there could be better publicity for the events - better ways to get in touch. An early notice of dates and then a follow up with the programme is suggested. We agree to complete the review and set the framework of the events at the next meeting.

Topics revisited in critical focus

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fairly good indication of this. Anthony suggests that there still remains an anomaly surrounding the '20 new shareholders a year' issue. He thinks it is reasonable to take the position put forward by Pat Taylor, the Registrar of Primary Producers Co-ops, that it doesn't apply because of the Supreme Court ruling. However it would seem that the Queensland Cooperative and Other Societies Act's express provisions on adoption of the Corporations Law mean that for co-ops registered under this Act it may still apply. There are still contradictory messages on this point. We agree that we need confirmation directly from the Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

Anthony notes that since the Queensland state election there is a new Attorney-General responsible for Queensland input to the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General Working Party on Consistent Cooperatives Legislation. He advises that the secretariat should therefore write again with our inquiries about proposals for legislative change in Queensland and to introduce the council to the Minister. This is agreed.

Anthony stresses that there is a prospect of change of legislation within eighteen months and that we should ensure we are prepared to act in this eventuality. He feels the council needs to be pro-active, particularly in relation to the regional community cooperatives. He thinks we can't simply



wait to be approached, because it may not happen. Peter says it was a similar situation with Credit Unions legislation. The AFIC advisory committee did not communicate back to Queensland or individual co-ops, and the peak bodies - CUSCAL in Sydney and Credit Link in Brisbane - were concerned with gaining industry dominance not member participation.

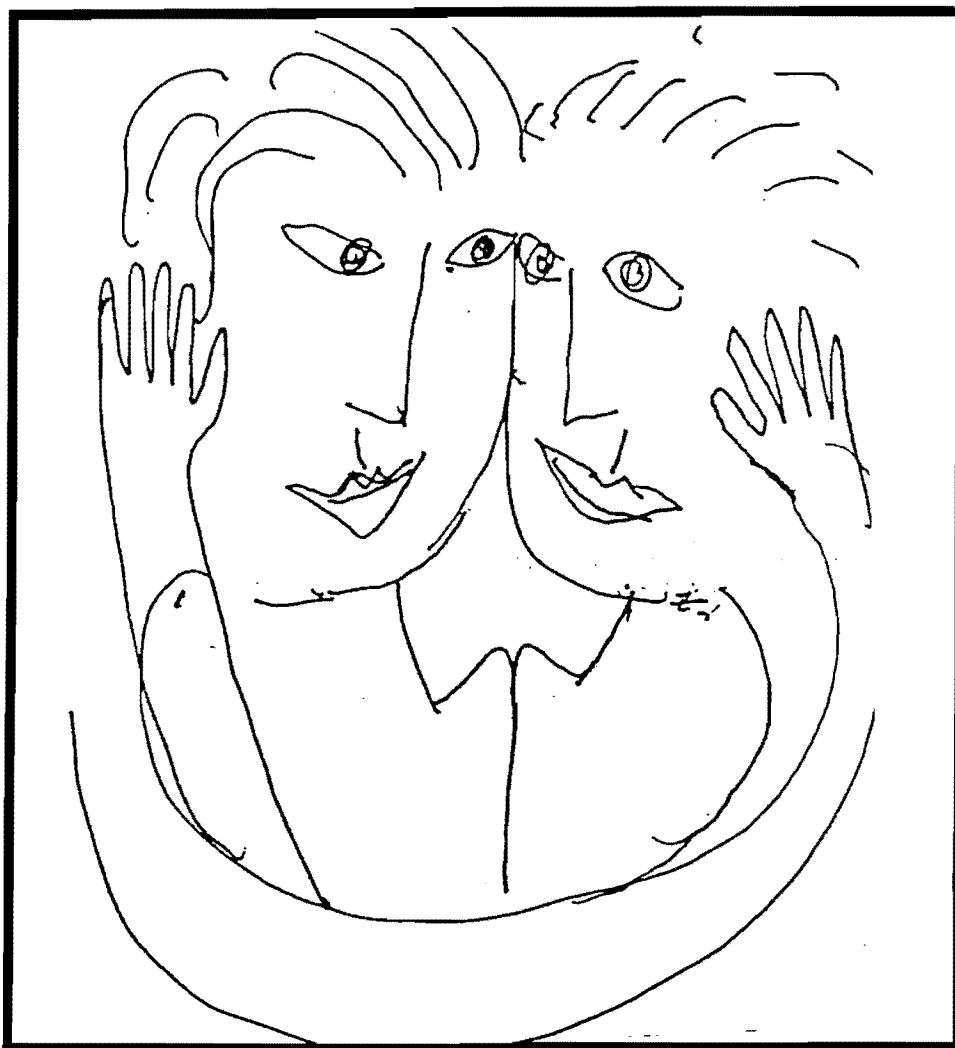
Correspondence and other secretary matters

Associate invitations

Anthony says he has written on behalf of the council to the individual co-ops who had been receiving complementary Council Papers through the last year. He invited them to associate with the council for the \$10 annual fee. He advised the co-ops that the council had "made changes to its membership structure .. and .. created an 'associate' provision to enable participation by representatives of cooperatives". He informed them that "the council provides a vehicle for a regional focus on cooperative development, ... that it is a unique association and the only standing regional, cooperative interest group".

Council Papers mailing list

Anthony presented the mail listings of those who have previously received the Council Papers and of SEQ-region community co-ops and organisations. He asked for advice or suggestions on the complimentary mailouts and whether there would be benefit in including the co-op registry on the list. Peter suggested that the brief newsletter that accompanied the last mailout of Council Papers was a very good addition and that it would be good to produce these with each issue and useful to send the newsletter only to the registry. The eventual composition of the mailing list was left with Anthony.



Reply from Attorney-General's Department

The council received a form letter from the Attorney-General's Department Business Law Division saying that the Division would "reply in due course" to our "inquiries concerning the impact of legislation on

cooperative development". Anthony commented that we probably couldn't expect anything different to the responses already given through the parliament to the same questions.

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Community Capital

Merv gives some background on this issue. He says he developed ideas for a 'community capital' campaign, which have previously been presented to the council, around the time of the budget changes to taxation of credit unions. He advanced these ideas in two ways. First, by seeking support from the University of Queensland Credit Union. The Credit Union could campaign for credit union's new tax liabilities to be redefined as 'community capital investment'. This would be targeted at employment generation and under credit union control. Alternatively, it would explore new roles in employment generation. This second option was accepted by the Credit Union's AGM.

Second, he wrote a paper for possible inclusion in a book on alliance politics. The paper had a description of a community

capital campaign as an example of developing a third dimension of politics in a 'two dimensional' political system - of reinvigorating citizen power as a direct challenge to the power of the state and the power of corporate capital.

His interests in this area have included ideas for a film on strategic issues such as the international trend towards 'demutualisation' of old mutual societies and the International Cooperative Alliance centennial conference which would be considering two new principles - those of concern for community and autonomy, that is, freedom from state intervention. He feels these issues "keep coming up constantly" and that we "need to know what's going on".

Merv explained that for personal reasons he has not had the energy for a broad campaign on the tax issue but that the opportunity

with the University of Queensland Credit Union is still open. At this stage he is looking at a proposal for Community Works to research issues and examples in this area. It was agreed that this would be a positive development and that the council should write a letter of support for Community Works on this. It was moved by Jeff Walz, seconded by Ann Jupp and carried by consensus.

Anthony noted that the Hansard record provided by Dee Margetts did not contain our questions or any answers on the Credit Union taxation issues. Jeff asked Peter, given that it is so hard now to set up a credit union, when there would be a Maleny Credit Union branch in Brisbane? Peter said that it wasn't too likely but that there are other, Brisbane, Credit Union's around, for example the Bardon Parish Credit Union, which are, like Maleny's, ethical and small.



Proposed Queensland Uni Food Co-op update



The council received correspondence from the University of Queensland Student Union Proposed Food Co-op Collective. They informed us that the "Union Executive decided to postpone the decision to fund the construction or operation of the proposed Food Cooperative, due to uncertainty surrounding upcoming costs and expenditures.

The late stage in the year at which this decision has been made is both unfortunate and frustrating to the dedicated group of people in the Food Co-op Collective who have been working hard over the last six months to get the Food Co-op up and running".

They said that "while it looks as though the Food Co-op will not happen this year, the Food Co-op Collective will not give up!

The achievements of the Food Co-op Collective so far and the plans it has for the rest of the year will mean that student awareness and support for the Co-op will be maintained and increased, and all necessary organisational and structural preparations will be in place if a future Union Executive decide to proceed with the Food Co-op."

The Collective detailed their achievements in Semester One. These include increasing student and community awareness of cooperatives and organics by information leaflets, articles in Semper and Union News, talking on 4zzz public

radio, holding stalls at Wednesday market days, Orientation Week, World Environment day, Fiesta and Reunion Week, and by conducting surveys measuring student interest in a Food Co-op.

They have undertaken self-education by sharing of books and other sources with each other, visiting and training at food cooperatives in Brisbane, touring four cooperatives in Maleny and Nambour and having a couple of people attend the 1995 Cooperative Education Weekend.

This has also helped them to establish contacts with the Cooperative Community Council, other co-ops, including some interstate, organic suppliers and community organisations.

The Collective has also spent considerable time laying the groundwork for the Co-op's structure and operations by formulating aims, policies, a constitution, job descriptions and decision processes.

They are currently developing a business plan and an architectural plan has been done in conjunction with the Student Union architect. They have also held a successful fundraising event - Eggplant - which raised \$500 and drew on student and community support.

The group continue to meet weekly and are organised to run "in a non-hierarchical, cooperative manner". Their letter expressed appreciation for our "input and support" and invited further communication from us.

CCC Response

We discussed a number of matters. These include that there might be an opportunity, with what Community Works is doing on community capital issues, to put it to the University of Queensland Credit Union that they support the Proposed Food Co-op. Also the council could write to the Credit Union in support.

Merv suggested that what "appears bad can be good": that the Student Union deferral could encourage an appreciation of the need for autonomy. We agreed that we would like to encourage the students to set up an autonomous co-op, not one dependent on the Student Union Executive.

The council decided to write in appreciation of the efforts of the Food Coop Collective. Our letter should say:

- that we support their efforts
- that we can offer help;
- ~ by encouraging the Community Works 'community capital' link to the University Credit Union
- ~ by a Cooperative Community Council letter of support for the co-op to the Credit Union, and
- ~ by a Cooperative Community Council letter of support for the co-op to the Student Union, and
- that we encourage their autonomy.

Finally, some concern was expressed that the use of the terms "non-hierarchy" and "collective" encourage political perceptions that may not lead to a broader understanding of cooperatives and cooperative organisation.

Notice - 32nd CCC meeting October 7th, 1995

1:00pm at the Secretariat, 39 St Johns Ave, Ashgrove, Brisbane

Lunch at 12 pm (please bring something to contribute)

PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Acceptance of minutes of the 31st CCC meeting
2. Business arising including -
 - i. Strategic issues in the regional community
 - ii. CCC & CESG cooperative agreement
 - iii. Review of CCC Cooperative Education Events
 - iv. Review of secretariat structure
 - v. Internet "page"
3. Other Business

3D Politics

Out of the Twilight Zone

Part 1: Citizen in Community

by Mervyn Partridge



For more than two centuries people identifying themselves primarily with capital or labor have struggled around the production sites of private corporations. They have conducted much of their struggle through the institutions of the state and they have wrestled for control of state apparatuses. Throughout that time there has been a *third pole* in the nexus of political-economic decision making and to some people it is very familiar.

Yet it has been made so weak and ephemeral that it either escapes notice or is quickly dismissed as unviable or irrelevant by many who are attentive to what they perceive as the main game of political economics. It is this dismissive response, together with the protection of resource concentrations by partisans of state and corporation, which maintains that weakness and condemns us to an exhausting treadmill which leads always back to the same essential place - a twilight zone of politics, culture and consciousness where stone giants walk at night as mortals watch by remote control.

I deliberately hesitate to hang a label on that third political space. No one label or tradition which passes through that space owns it. Nor should it be allowed to. I will try to sketch in some of the ghosts that inhabit it. First, however, I want to advance the plea that the vital importance of this space is recognised more widely so it can attract the light of critical debate. It is to be hoped that such discussion might prepare the ground for a politically conscious flow of resources and energy directly into this space to give it the chance to grow into a viable third centre of political-economic action, counterbalancing the state and private capital.



3D Politics

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Sofar, a strong third dimension of political-economic activity exists only as an opportunity and a challenge which lies ahead. There is no proven map of the actual terrain or of how to get there, though that journey is what counts. At present, we can only map scattered seedlings which have long struggled in poorly tended ground and we can experiment with innovations which might draw energies and resources together into a coherent pole. Success in the latter will depend on recognising key connections and strengthening them through careful focusing of energies along a critical path of development.

None of the terms commonly used to refer to the terrain of the third pole adequately fill the space. The third sector, the third system, the co-operative or community sector, the public sphere, social movements, community action: each alludes to part of the terrain, but none of them quite fills it. As a short hand to help the argument proceed, I will refer to it as the *citizen-community pole* or the *third dimension* of political-economy, as this composite term reflects the scope of action and the primary identifications which might make movement towards it politically achievable.

In trying to plot a map over the last two and a half centuries many paths criss-cross the broad terrain: friendly societies, producer and consumer co-operatives, the commons, abolitionist and feminist movements, community settlements, credit unions and building societies, non-government (development) organisations, the community business, community housing, education and welfare sector, ecology, minority and land rights movements, consumer protection groups, philanthropic trusts and charities, local and regional development agencies, community-based enterprise centres and business incubators, trade unions and clubs.

Many of these paths lead across the terrain I have in mind only during a portion of their history or in a part of their functioning. It is not their individual limitations or their mutual isolation which holds promise. Only if certain features found across this spectrum can be brought deliberately into mutual support might a coherent and effective political-economic pole come into being.

A political alliance which aimed to support the elaboration of a third dimension may need to pursue a temporary tactical shift in decision prerogatives towards the state as a step towards a strategic shift in prerogatives beyond the state. Were this the only tactic, the movement would doom itself and their efforts in the third dimension to a fragile

enterprise centres in Australia, or would they use government policy frameworks to support the self-reliant strengthening of communities?

Sketching 3D space

Role of the citizen

Strengthening the third dimension of politics means strengthening the role of the citizen, not simply as an *individual* with personal rights and interests, but as a point of power and of responsibility within a nexus of citizens who consciously identify with, share and value *community* interests.

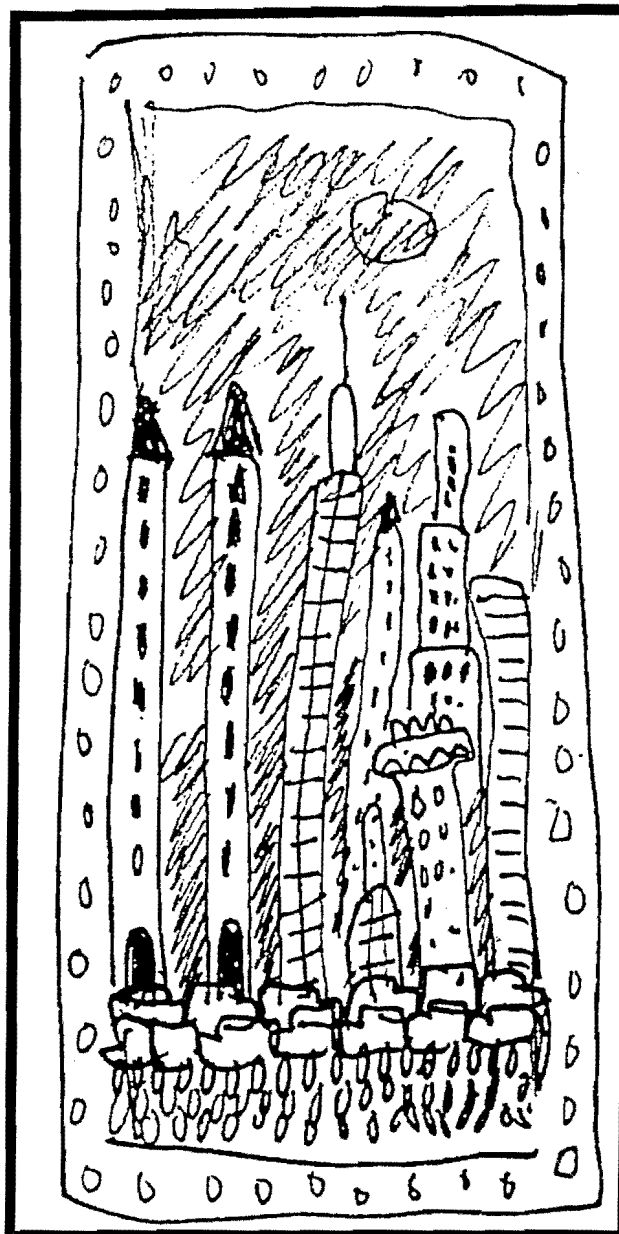
This must include effective access to substantial pools of resources such as capital and technology. It also requires access to the necessary education, training and skilled advice to inform sound deliberations about economic planning and investment decisions. And it requires political processes that allow well informed deliberation and the strategic focusing of resources to ensure that the path is one of development and not of palliative charity or welfare.

Nowadays when individuals identify with their role as citizen it is mainly in the defensive posture of rights to be protected or won (and this is the sort of identification which has limited the scope of most of the social movements).

Reliance on claiming and defending rights cedes the prerogatives of power and its responsibilities to those who withhold rights. It means the adoption of a relatively weak and defensive role. Adopting a positive citizen role means claiming decision powers and accepting responsibilities with them.

It also means claiming those powers and responsibilities for other people with whom we may not agree. By doing this we legitimate and universalise the role and the accessible decision structures which are built around it.

So we can do politics by emphasising the building of just structures rather than aiming to win our own ascendancy within existing unjust structures. We also create a point of focus which people can move forward towards (while leaving slightly in the background their primary identifications with a particular social movement or



dependency as an appendage of the state - subject to future erosion.

Direct action within the third dimension must have high priority. The Alliance in New Zealand is actively oriented towards increased state intervention in the economy and at the same time towards community and regional development, but where their *strategic* focus lies seems as yet undecided.

Were they to attain strong influence on government would they build pseudo-structures in community space which remained under the remote control of the bureaucracy, as has occurred with government "sponsored" community housing and some

political party or private business or trade union or ethnic tradition).

A new political alliance could mean a convenient joining of the dots on an existing map or it could mean a new synthesis, a shift in political culture. Reflecting on a decade of new and alternative political organisations in Australia it seems to me that unless a distinctively new and intrinsically rewarding political culture grows out of a new alliance it will not generate more energy than the sum of its parts, maybe less.

Our culture does not nurture primary identification with a powerful and responsible role of citizen in community. It isn't real, power is not available to the citizen *as citizen* and so is sought elsewhere.

Yet, it seems to me that only by deliberately investing attention in that atrophied space can it become culturally and politically real and make living community possible as a popular focus of identification.

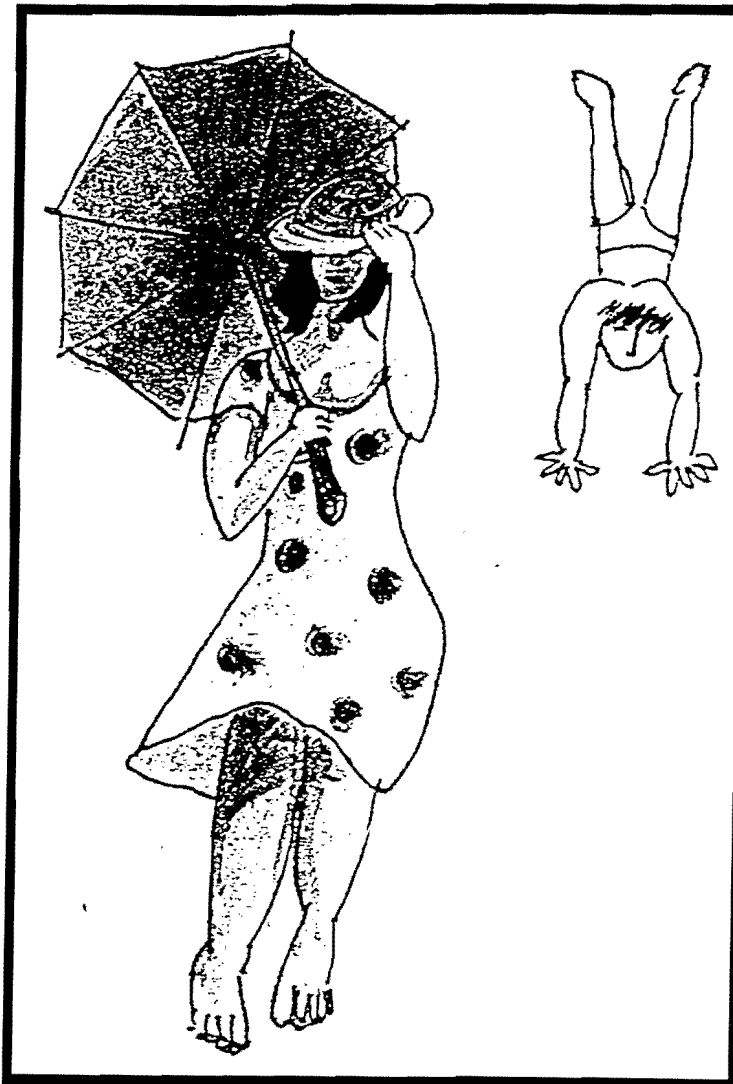
Community as field for action, focus of identification and as process

Community is a loose term. It often refers to geographic locations where people come into close contact because of the physical proximity of where they live or work. It is also used to describe affinities of interest, values or background as in "ethnic communities" or "religious community" or "community of scholars".

To recognise why *community* can be a powerful field for political-economic action it may be helpful to separate out several layers of involvement which affect social cohesion. Whether the boundaries of a community are shaped by shared locality or shared culture there is a starting position of *common ground which is valued highly*, even if differently.

The effects of decisions which impact on this ground will be experienced in common - for some as benefits for others as costs. Community clearly does not guarantee unity of purpose around major goals, however it can make it easier to negotiate.

The possibility of direct human contact with other people affected by decisions forces decision makers into live contact with consequences and opens the possibility of dialogue at every encounter. Together these factors, the direct experience of consequences and the exposure to dialogue, signal a dramatic structural shift in politics away from the decision making processes of trans-national corporate management, international financiers and Canberra bureaucrats.



A political process with a national scope cannot demand this factor in all decision making but it can recognise its value and try to maximise it's inclusion as a way of grounding political experience.

I suggest the universalising role of citizen as a step on the path to a more grounded politics because identification with that sort of role helps to set an attitude, a mind-set which is conducive to the growth of live connected community - where people turn progressively away from an isolated existence and grow more and more *towards* each other. The experience of being-in-community is rare today in industrial societies but

does occur under appropriate conditions. Some people fear it because they are psychologically or politically dependant on processes which do not thrive in conscious community: factionalism, demagoguery and bureaucratic manoeuvring.

Far from being some touchy-feely exercise or "warm-inner glowism" active and conscious community process is a powerful political force. It is the powerful essence of the cooperative movement at its best and of what made "solidarity" a banner for the labor movement.

It generates and multiplies energy and resources by unifying them and producing more comprehensive solutions to problems which receive more committed support. Advocates of consensus decision making processes often claim such advantages for their decision tools. It is a hasty claim which shares hazards with idol worship in general.

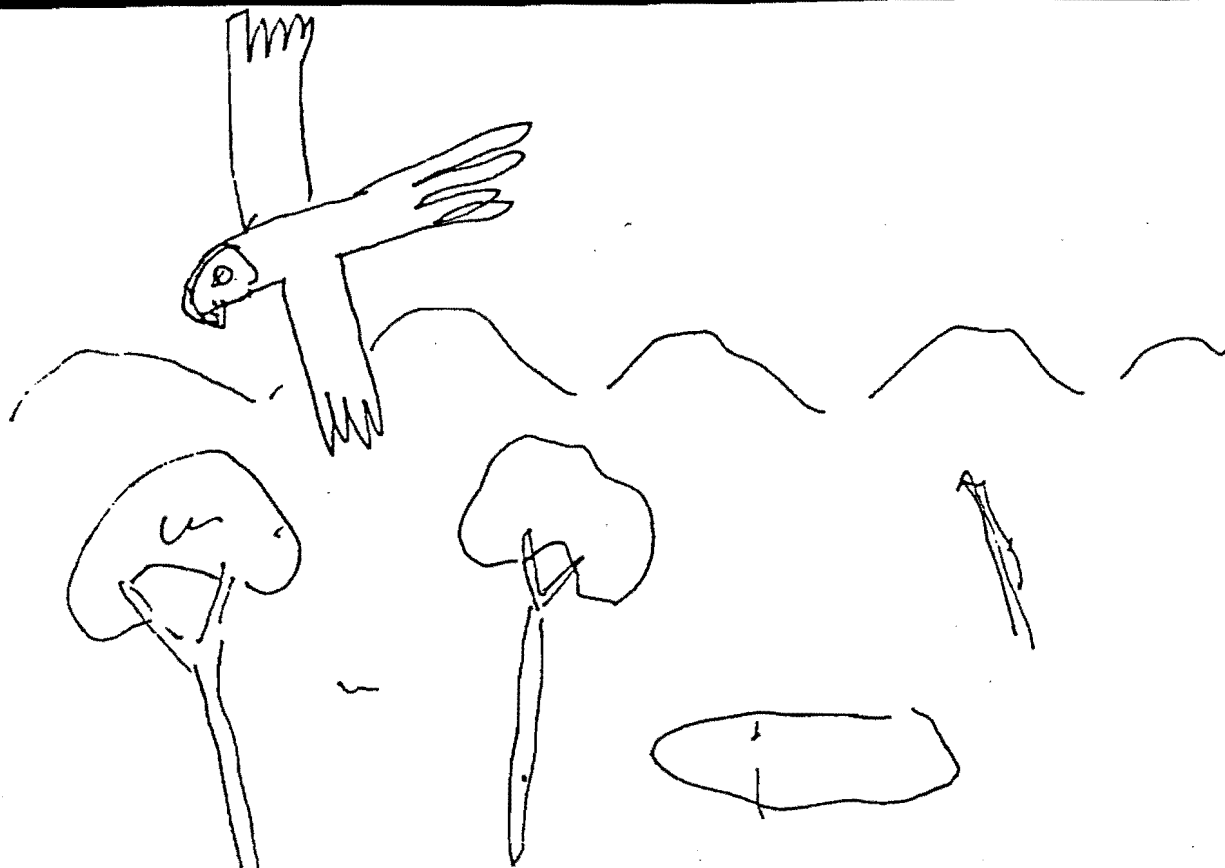
Consensus is not community

Decisions made by consensus happen readily and often very quickly when people are *with* each other. Like the bringing of the attitude of citizen to a community meeting, consensus decision making skills can be useful tools which *can sometimes* help to ignite the experience of being-in-community.

A lot of the problems groups experience with consensus decision making come from mistaking consensus for the sense of community. If members of a group working by consensus procedures start out lacking clear mutual recognition of high priority ground in common or otherwise have

hidden agendas or shoulder chips set against entering the *intimacy* of community awareness then good decisions will not be reached easily or will not be supported.

The sense of community is the *precondition* for the most effective consensus decision making, *not vice versa*. The latter is often best left aside unless conditions conducive to the former are genuinely established. Those conditions include the initial definition of the boundaries of the decision making community to ensure human scale and, more importantly, the unreserved mutual



3D Politics

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Recognition that many very high priority goals and values are strongly shared and that highest priority goals and values are not in conflict. It is just as damaging for members of a group to doubt that critical common ground is shared, when it really is, as to assume the condition is met, when it is not.

Implications for Organising

What implications does this have for community organisation or for broader political organisation? It takes time and suitable conditions for sustainable organisation to grow. Patience and timing yes, raging ambition and force feeding no. Quality before quantity.

The boundary definition of a new organisation has a critical bearing on how quickly or easily the membrane of individualised experience can be broken and the sense of community born. Implied is the need for thorough, exploratory discussion across a broad terrain before any binding structural or policy decisions are even tentatively put in place.

Hard decisions about who is included in the decision community can enhance the conditions for "solidarity". However, they can also reduce diversity and the speed of negotiated change which is sensitive to the broader culture.

Tight definition of the boundaries of inclusion can be most important in community businesses, housing communities and political communities. Tight definition is impossible and inappropriate in "public" community meetings where attendance is self defining. Here the citizen role and advanced consensus decision making skills become of primary importance.

As the boundaries of a community become broader dialogue becomes less likely and common starting ground becomes more diffuse, tenuous. The tangible value of "community" becomes less as the abstract objectification of others becomes easier - the realities of exploitative behaviour can be escaped.

This alienating identification of others has been a cultural feature which has been magnified as communications have become global and as "markets" have moved from community to nation to world. The free market magicians who sincerely equate *3D community markets* with *2D trans-national markets* are among the more extreme cultural victims of a political-economic process which has winked out of human scale space.

As the atrophy of community comes to be more widely perceived as a political cost of modern society, community acquires a political value. The lost sense of being-in-community that people are mourning is a real experience, a mutual act of experience.

Politics in 3D is a move towards others - a reconstruction of the conditions under which the spirit of co-operation will spontaneously flourish. This discussion has looked at how individual roles and attitudes can open a path to community experience. The next step in the discussion will be to look at how policies and institutions might look in 3D.



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